

CITY OF SAN JOSÉ, CALIFORNIA
Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
801 North First Street, Room 400
San José, California 95110-1795

Hearing Date/Agenda Number
P.C. 06/12/02 Item No.

File Number
PDC 01-05-063

Application Type
Planned Development Rezoning

Council District
9

Planning Area
Cambrian-Pioneer

Assessor's Parcel Number(s)
421-36-009 and -011

STAFF REPORT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Completed by: Teresa Estrada

Location: Northwest corner of Samaritan Drive and Samaritan Place

Gross Acreage: 20.7 Net Acreage: 20.7 Net Density: N/A

Existing Zoning: CP-Commercial Pedestrian and CO-Commercial Office Existing Use: Good Samaritan Hospital

Proposed Zoning: A(PD) Planned Development Proposed Use: Demolition of an existing 35,835 square foot hospital wing and replacement with a 48,204 square foot addition & freestanding heliport

GENERAL PLAN

Completed by: TE

Land Use/Transportation Diagram Designation
Public/Quasi-Public and Office

Project Conformance:
☒ Yes ☐ No
☒ See Analysis and Recommendations

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

Completed by: TE

North: State Route 85 County

East: Single-family attached residential R-M & A(PD) Planned Development

South: Medical office uses CO-Commercial Office & A(PD) Planned Development

West: Medical office (Samaritan Medical Center) A(PD) Planned Development

ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

Completed by: TE

☐ Environmental Impact Report found complete
☒ Negative Declaration adopted on May 22, 2002

☐ Exempt
☐ Environmental Review Incomplete

FILE HISTORY

Completed by: TE

Annexation Title: Parker No. 7

Date: January 30, 1973

PLANNING DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION

☒ Approval
☐ Approval with Conditions

Date: _____

Approved by: _____
☐ Action
☒ Recommendation

APPLICANT

DEVELOPER/OWNER

Dennis E. Wilson
Horizon Consulting Services
P.O. Box 1448 Modesto, CA 95353

Good Samaritan Hospital, a Delaware Ltd. Partnership
c/o William Picho, CEO
2425 Samaritan Drive San Jose, CA 95124

PUBLIC AGENCY COMMENTS RECEIVED

Completed by: TE

Department of Public Works

See Final Response Memo dated June 6, 2002.

Other Departments and Agencies

Letter from CA CHP to applicant, dated April 4, 2002.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

Letter from Tom Meier, received May 21, 2002.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Good Samaritan Hospital, is requesting a Planned Development Rezoning of approximately 20.7 gross acres from the CP-Commercial Pedestrian and CO-Commercial Office Zoning District to A(PD) Planned Development. The project would allow an addition of up to 48,204 square feet (net after demolition) of hospital space to the existing hospital complex for a Women's and Children's Center. The new hospital wing would replace the existing psychiatric wing that is proposed for demolition. The new square footage for the project is proposed to alleviate existing overcrowding within the hospital facility. The applicant's proposal also includes a helicopter landing pad for an Emergency Medical Services Helicopter which has operated for approximately two years without City of San Jose land use approval, but with the approval of other responsible agencies.

The existing hospital facility comprises approximately 395,795 square feet. The primary hospital tower, built in the 1960's has six floors. Several building wings, ranging from 1 to 4 stories were built subsequently at different periods. The site includes a separate on-site childcare facility; located near the terminus of Samaritan Place, of approximately 6,690 square feet that serves up to 85 children. An addition to the hospital was constructed in 1988 on the east side of the main hospital building adjacent to Samaritan Drive.

Samaritan Medical Center, which is not affiliated with Good Samaritan Hospital, is located to the west and was the subject of a recently approved Planned Development Rezoning (PDC00-06-055) for an expansion consisting of a 70,500 square foot medical office building and a 3-level parking structure. Independent medical office uses are located to the south across Samaritan Drive. To the west across Samaritan Place are single-family attached residential uses and a senior housing complex. Highway 85 is located to the north, and is depressed below a large retaining wall.

Project Description

The proposed project involves the demolition of approximately 35,835 square feet of hospital space near the rear area of the main hospital building and the construction of approximately 84,039 square feet of new hospital space. The net increase in building area will be 48,204 square feet for a total building square footage for the site comprising 452,686 square feet, including the childcare facility. The new four-story building addition will generally be situated in the same area as the one-story psychiatric wing, which is proposed for demolition. The new additions will have a slightly smaller building footprint than the hospital wing it replaces.

A small parking lot will be created behind the proposed addition that will link all other existing surface parking areas. Access to the site is currently provided through four existing driveways on Samaritan Drive, a four-lane

street. This project does not provide cross-vehicular access with the adjacent Samaritan Medical Center.

The proposal includes the construction of a 12-foot tall raised, concrete landing pad for emergency medical services helicopters at the northwesterly portion of the site in the parking area. Parking will be provided beneath the heliport. The helicopter operations have been in place since 1999 with the existing landing pad in the same general location as the new raised heliport. The existing operation has not been formally recognized with any previous land use approvals from the City.

GENERAL PLAN CONFORMANCE

The proposed rezoning is consistent with the San José 2020 General Plan Land Use/Transportation Diagram designation of Public/Quasi-Public and Office in that the proposed private hospital and medical office uses are consistent with uses allowed in the Public/Quasi-Public and Office designations.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A Mitigated Negative Declaration was circulated for the project on May 1, 2002, and adopted on May 22, 2002. The primary environmental issues that were addressed included 1) traffic, 2) noise from the helicopter operations, 3) loss of trees, and hazardous materials. Mitigation has been incorporated into the proposed project to reduce any potentially significant impacts on the environment to less than significant levels. One comment letter regarding helicopter noise levels was received and is attached to this staff report.

Traffic Impacts

The Department of Public Works determined that a traffic report was not required for the project, since the proposed addition resulted in a net increase of only 18 new patient beds, and a relatively nominal increase in associated personnel. The project is conditioned appropriately to limit the maximum number of hospital beds, outpatient beds, number of staff personnel and children at the on-site daycare facility. The project conforms to the Transportation Level of Service Policy and has no significant environmental impacts.

Noise

The noise analysis for CEQA purposes includes the applicable noise standards, description of the existing condition, project description, and project noise impacts. The project will not have a significant long-term exterior or interior noise impact.

Standards

CEQA does not define what amount of noise level increase would be considered a significant impact. Typically, in a high noise environment in San Jose, if the DNL increase due to the project is by more than 3 dBA at noise-sensitive receptors, the impact is considered significant. Areas near major freeways, such as around the project, or other major noise sources are generally considered high noise environments.

The CEQA checklist addresses ambient noise levels, and applicable thresholds of other agencies. It does not directly address noise from single events, such as trains passing by or aircraft flying overhead. Ambient noise level refers to long-term average noise levels. The CEQA checklist is interpreted to refer to activities associated with a project that will increase the ambient noise level for an extended period of time, without resulting in a permanent increase in the ambient noise level (e.g., construction noise).

The City uses the San Jose 2020 General Plan noise standards as the threshold of significance for purposes of CEQA. The acceptable noise level objectives are 55 DNL as the long-range exterior noise quality level, and 60 DNL as the short-range, and more realistic, exterior noise level. Non-residential uses located adjacent to existing or planned noise sensitive receptors, i.e. residential uses, should mitigate noise generation to meet the 55 DNL level at the property line. Residential areas adjacent to major roadways have been identified as special noise impact areas where it may be impossible to attain the desired outdoor noise level of 55 or 60 DNL without eliminating the beneficial attributes of the exterior spaces. The interior noise quality level is 45 DNL. The maximum exterior noise level necessary to avoid significant adverse health effects is 76 DNL.

As a point of reference to evaluate the proposed helicopter operation, the Santa Clara County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) sets forth guidelines for proposed helicopter projects. The ALUC guidelines would not allow residential structures within the 65 dB CNEL noise impact boundary to be generated when the helicopter reaches full-scale operation. The maximum A-weighted noise level at the nearest residentially zoned area should not exceed 80 dBA by reason of the heliport. The annual interior CNEL level, with windows closed, should not exceed a CNEL of 45 in any habitable room of a residential structure.

Project Description

Emergency medical service transport, and occasional emergency inter-facility patient transfer, helicopters have been landing and taking off from the project site since 1999. The hospital estimates that there have been about 70 such events per year. For noise analysis purposes the projected maximum number of flights was 125 per year. The flight path of the helicopters typically are directly over State Route 85 with helicopters arriving from the west maintaining a 500-foot altitude over existing residences. The departing flight path is to the west remaining above State Route 85, until an altitude of at least 1,000 feet is achieved.

Each patient drop-off involves a total of two helicopter landings and two take-offs in the following sequence:

1. Helicopter arrives at hospital to pick up a nurse who will assist during the transport.
2. Helicopter departs to pick up the patient with the nurse.
3. Helicopter returns to the hospital with the patient and nurse.
4. Helicopter departs to home base.

The helicopter will stay on the ground with the engine idling for at least two minutes after landing and prior to take-off. Helicopters will not be stored on-site and no maintenance or training activities will occur at the hospital.

The proposed permanent helicopter-landing pad is to be elevated approximately twelve feet above grade, in the northwesterly parking lot closest to State Route 85. This is in the same general area of the parking lot currently used as the helicopter-landing pad. The heliport is to be elevated in order to satisfy State Department of Transportation, Division of Aeronautics heliport design requirements.

Existing Noise

Existing noise levels due to vehicular traffic and other sources exceed the short- and long-term noise goals of the General Plan with existing DNL ranging from 61 to 66 dBA at residential locations north and south of the heliport. Existing noise levels due to vehicular traffic from the freeway and other streets currently exceed the short and long-term noise goals of the City.

Project Impacts

Noise from helicopter landings and departures was measured indoors and outdoors at three separate residential locations on different sides of the hospital. Measurements were taken during helicopter approaches, landings and departures. Site specific noise measurements were taken with a helicopter flying to and from areas north of Highway 85, arriving from the east maintaining a 500-foot altitude over existing residences, and then departing to the south of the hospital. Measurements were also taken while the helicopter hovered at ground level and at 12 feet to simulate the use of a raised heliport as proposed.

The noise impacts for the helicopter operations were evaluated based on the standards in the General Plan. Since the emergency helicopter operations are unpredictable and infrequent occurrences, the operation noise impacts were evaluated on an annualized basis as used by the FAA. The DNL noise descriptor is the average day-night level with a penalty applied to noise occurring during the nighttime hours (10pm-7pm) to account for the increased sensitivity of people during sleeping hours. CNEL and DNL are essentially equivalent.

Maximum (single event) noise levels at residences will occur when the helicopter is airborne on approach or departure, not when it is landing, taking off or idling on the heliport. Once the helicopter has landed, it is inaudible or barely audible at all of the residential locations where measurements were taken. Since the helicopter is moving during approach and departure, the duration of noisy “events” is very short for only several seconds as the helicopter flies past. The maximum noise levels range from 81 to 89 dBA. The noise levels generated by helicopters flying over are expected to be no louder than, and in most areas substantially less loud than, noise levels from garbage pickup. Comparatively, the noise level of a lawn mower is 100 dBA and an orchestral crescendo at 25 feet or a noise kitchen is 90 dBA.

The project will result in no increase in long-term average sound levels for exterior locations. The interior noise level is 39 dBA and well below the General Plan standard. Project generated average exterior noise levels are below the General Plan goal of DNL 55dBA. The noise report identified that the project generated noise level of helicopter flights, measured annually, is 44 to 54 DNL. The existing noise levels are 61 to 66 DNL. Therefore, the addition of project noise to existing noise results in a less than significant noise impact. The project will not create a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project.

Trees

A tree survey prepared for the site indicates that 28 ordinance and non-ordinance size trees of various species existing on the project site will be removed as part of the project. Loss of these non-ordinance size trees would not constitute a significant impact since these trees will be replaced on site with 24” box or 15-gallon trees at standard mitigation rates.

Hazardous Materials

The hospital is required to have emergency power backup and currently has two diesel powered generators. There are two 20,000 underground diesel storage tanks and the site is currently listed on the State of California Hazardous Wastes and Substances Site List. Normal hospital and medical operations generate various by-products that are considered hazardous waste. Good Samaritan Hospital currently holds the appropriate permits and follows a hazardous materials business plan. A hazardous materials storage permit is required for the proposed project in accordance with the Fire Department requirements. The Planned Development permit will include a condition that the use or storage of hazardous materials, liquids, gases and/or chemicals meet the requirements of the City’s Hazardous Materials Storage Ordinance, the Toxic Gas Ordinance, and the applicable Fire Codes. No significant hazardous materials impacts will result from the project.

ANALYSIS

The key issues that were analyzed with this project included; 1) helicopter operations, 2) site design, 3) conformance with the Commercial Design Guidelines (CDGs), and 4) architecture.

Helicopter Operations

The emergency medical services helicopter operation was given the most scrutiny as a part of the project. The emergency medical service helicopter operation presently exists and has operated for approximately 2 ½ years without benefit of City land use approvals or CEQA review. However, the existing operation has enabled “real” data on operations and noise to be gathered and evaluated. As previously discussed, the long-term noise impacts from this component of the project comply with the General Plan noise standards. Short-term or limited exposure to single-event noise impacts at the levels generated by this project would not cause serious long-term health problems due to the limited time duration.

Design alternatives to further minimize the noise impacts for the heliport were discussed by staff and the consultants. These included consideration of an at-grade-landing pad and/or taller soundwalls or berms as an added measure to further reduce noise levels. However, since the noise impacts are greatest while helicopters are in flight and beyond the boundaries of site, such project modifications would not result in any significant reduction in noise. Further, such measures would create additional obstacles for the helicopter rotor, thus posing a greater relative risk for accidents during takeoffs or landings.

The proposed Planned Development Rezoning limits the helicopter operations to emergency medical services transport only, and is not permitted for routine hospital business use. The use of helicopters for emergency transport of critical patients is a vital service that is a beneficial for the public health and welfare. Staff will coordinate with the other responsible agencies, primarily CA Department of Transportation, at the Planned Development permit stage to assure compliance with other required permits and assess other appropriate operational conditions.

Site Design & Parking

The new building, proposed in much the same area as the existing wing to be demolished, will be placed in a manner that strengthens and better defines the key circulation elements. The new building addition will focus towards the interior of the property. The placement of the addition in close proximity to the existing building will allow pedestrian circulation and provide a connection and better vehicular circulation between the two existing parking lots.

The parking requirement for hospitals in the CP-Commercial Pedestrian is one space per 2.5 beds for in-patient facilities and 1:250 square feet for outpatient facilities. A more comprehensive approach for establishing an appropriate parking requirement for this particular facility was made based on historical and current occupancy data for the existing facility, including visitors, employees, and patients. Staff has determined this to be appropriate since large hospitals are such a specialized use. The proposed project will provide for a total of 1,336 parking spaces upon completion. The applicant is making minor technical corrections to the General Development Plan, which are currently not reflected in the Planning Commission packet plan set. Staff has reviewed the draft corrections and will ensure that the final and corrected parking ratios are included on the plans prior to final City Council consideration on this matter.

Area residents have indicated that parking from medical related uses have encroached into the residential areas

to the south. Staff has concluded that since parking spaces are almost always available during the day, such intrusions are most likely the result of parking deficiencies of the independent medical offices located on the south side of Samaritan Drive. Many of these adjacent facilities, built in the 1960's are under-parked based on current zoning requirements. This issue will be addressed as part of the on-going traffic calming study being conducted for this area (see "Public Outreach" section of this report).

Conformance with the Commercial Design Guidelines (CDGs)

The proposed project substantially conforms to all key elements of the CDGs for medical offices with regards to site design and landscaping within the project. In accordance with the guidelines, the design of the new medical wing and surface parking area have been designed to comply with the policies for setbacks, accessibility and convenient parking and safe circulation. Pedestrian pathways exist to provide connections to the various building entrances.

Although not currently proposed by the applicant, staff is recommending that the front perimeter landscaped area between the main project entrance and the westerly property line (next to Samaritan Medical Center) are increased to 25 feet. This will conform to current design standards and other existing or planned facilities located along this street. The creation of additional parking spaces near the existing daycare center and/or restriping of existing areas for unistall size parking spaces would avoid any loss of parking in this immediate area.

Although the existing perimeter landscape setback along Samaritan Place is also substandard, a row of tall mature hedges exists to provide adequate screening of the existing parking lot for the adjacent residential uses across the street. Unless the hedges are removed and replaced with lower shrubs, the widening of this landscaped area would not provide any direct visual benefit from the street. Therefore, no changes to this area are proposed or recommended. Internal landscaped areas exist within the parking lots, however these areas will be further reviewed at the Planned Development Permit stage to determine the appropriateness of further minor landscape upgrades. Service facilities are located within the interior of the site so that they are not visible from streets and to minimize circulation conflicts and noise impacts.

Architecture

The proposed structures are generally compatible in terms of materials, colors, proportion, and scale with existing structures on-site. The various building additions constructed at different periods of time do not have a common architectural theme to integrate themselves with the main hospital building. For this reason, it was not deemed as critical for the proposed addition to match the existing hospital tower architecture. Additionally, the proposed addition does not have high visibility from the street. Further refinement of building architecture and landscaping details will be reviewed at the Planned Development permit stage to ensure appropriate design details.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Notices for the community meeting, public hearings and environmental review was distributed to the owners and tenants of all properties located within 1,000 feet of the project site. Two neighborhood meetings were held regarding the proposed project.

The first meeting was held on June 27, 2001 by the project architects. Area residents were disappointed that representatives from the hospital's administration were not in attendance. Several residents attended and

identified concerns about parking, traffic, and noise from the emergency helicopter operations, delivery trucks and mechanical equipment. Specific solutions were not identified at this meeting.

A second community meeting was held on February 12, 2002. Although previous raised issues were discussed, the primary focus was noise from the emergency medical service helicopter operation. The applicant's noise consultant provided a comprehensive explanation of noise levels and mitigation limitations. Although the neighborhood was concerned about the level of noise associated with the use of the heliport, they concurred that the proposed use is necessary, but would like to have enforcement options through the rezoning for if Good Samaritan is overusing the heliport. Staff identified that the proposed rezoning would allow the City better control of the uses of the site through limiting the number of flights and the flight path for the heliport.

Although not related only to this project, on September 12, 2001, a community meeting was sponsored by the Public Works Department and Department of Transportation to discuss traffic calming issues for the overall hospital and medical office area. On going meetings and coordination with the Town of Los Gatos will be scheduled in the future on this issue.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning staff recommends that the following condition be added to the project: "The developer shall provide a 25-foot wide front perimeter landscape area along Samaritan Drive between the main driveway entrance and the westerly property line consistent with surrounding properties at the Planned Development Permit stage to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning".

Upon inclusion of the above stated condition, staff recommends approval of the in the proposed Planned Development Rezoning for the following reasons:

1. The project conforms to the General Plan Land Use/Transportation Diagram designation of Public/Quasi-Public and Office.
2. The proposed project conforms to the requirements of CEQA.
3. The project conforms to the applicable development standards prescribed by the Zoning Ordinance.
4. The project conforms to the Commercial Design Guidelines.
5. The proposed project will be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.
6. The proposed emergency medical services transport heliport will provide an essential public benefit.

c: Mike O'Reilly, V. Pres., Lost Oaks Homeowners Association, 2397 Lost Oaks Drive, San Jose, CA 95124
Paulo Hernandez, Silicon Valley Advisors, LLC, 1150 North First Street, Suite 130 San Jose, CA 95112

Attachments: Location Map, Adopted ND, Project Memos,